

# The Humanist Society of the Suncoast

A Socratic society dedicated to the proposition that the fully examined life is well worth living.  
Member organization of the [Humanists of Florida](#), the [AHA](#), [COR](#), and [CSH](#). Find us at [www.suncoasthumanist.com](http://www.suncoasthumanist.com)

July meeting off. **Moved to August 6th!**

## Skepticism:

*You have nothing to lose but your chains.*



As freethinkers, we often allow ourselves to be defined in terms of what we are not (e.g., "An *atheist* is NOT a theist"). And because of the persistence of superstition into the present, books by the new atheists typically concentrate on presenting the negative, or rebuttal, case against superstition rather than on presenting (except by implication) the positive, or constructive, case for skepticism.

In his upcoming presentation to The Humanist Society of the Suncoast (Clearwater East Library, 2:00 PM, **August 6th, 2011**), writer, editor, philosopher, and skeptic Bob Shepherd both calls for and attempts to illustrate a new approach to Humanist outreach based upon what people have to gain from adopting skepticism as a way of life. In a wide-ranging talk entitled "*Perspectivism, Skepticism, and the Art of Living*," Shepherd will explain

- a) why skepticism as ordinarily conceived isn't nearly skeptical enough, and
- b) how a profound, thorough-going skepticism can make our lives incalculably richer, more interesting, more creative, and more worth living.

For another sample of Bob's excellent writings, see page 7

**Please support the Humanist Society**



**Don't Forget...**

## Tampa Bay Harvest Please...

bring as many boxed and canned food items  
as you can to this meeting.

With the important help of Glenn Paul and

Tampa Bay Harvest, we can do our part to help relieve significant human suffering in our area. This year's goal: 1000 pounds. **It's the Humanist thing to do!**

Coordinator, Glenn Paul says that Tampa Bay Harvest food deliveries in the past year - statistics -

TB Harvest delivered 2,765,517 pounds of food to 220 agencies who feed the hungry in Pinellas and Hillsborough counties last year. That's 5,531,000 meals to feed the hungry by TBH's calculations.

**Please join us  
for this free and  
open discussion.**

**On Saturday,  
August 6th**

**at 2 PM:**

**Clearwater East  
Library  
2251 Drew St.  
Clearwater**

Following our  
meeting, many of us  
will dine and argue  
together at the

**Farmer Boy  
Restaurant**

at 2129 Drew St. just 2  
blocks west of

Volume 20 No. 7

July, 2011

Join us in our effort to ignite  
critical thinking, and embrace  
reason, & compassion in life.

~ **Join or Renew** ~

**The Humanist Society  
of the Suncoast.**

☞ Trial - 3 month - free news

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Send to: Glenn Paul, Treasurer  
Suncoast Humanist Society  
2507 First St. #E  
Indian Rocks Beach  
33785-3010



Help Pakistan, Haiti, Japan,  
Chile, etc. with secular charity.

**Now, Find the Humanist  
Society on Facebook!**

**Be a Friend!**

Thanks to Bob Byrch!



*Humanists work to build a world in which happiness is the enduring criterion of social policy.*

## What do Humanists Want?

1. To extend a human centered approach to the critical problems of life and society.
2. To encourage attitudes of kindness, compassion, tolerance and a loving generosity in human relationships, and in our treatment of all life. These attitudes help us to see ourselves in the lives of others and encourage appreciation for the remarkable diversity of human culture and experience.
3. To develop and popularize the skills of creative and critical thinking that empower people to challenge prejudice, superstition and irrationality in every area of life. Such empowerment enables the individual to reach the highest levels of achievement.
4. To exalt those artistic and imaginative expressions of life which have been the source of the greatest pleasure and enlightenment, and which reflect compelling human truths. Through music, literature, art, dance, and other expressions, we embrace the essence of the human spirit.
5. To explore the grounds of ethics and morality within the unfolding history of our evolving culture. Such knowledge will enable us to become effective protagonists for the happiness of the individual person. JP

## The moveable feast for July

will be held at the ( Hmmm...this looks familiar )

## Island Way Grill

on Sunday, July 17th at 5:00PM. This fine restaurant is located at 20 Island Way about half way across the Memorial Causeway, a continuation of route 60 through Clearwater on the way to Clearwater Beach.

They offer a large selection of early bird specials for \$12.50 per person, which includes soup or salad, coffee or tea and a desert.

[Check it out at [www.islandwaygrill.com](http://www.islandwaygrill.com)] They also offer house wines and import beers for \$3.50 at this hour.

Please reserve with Glenn Paul at 727-595-3347 or [kpaul29@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:kpaul29@tampabay.rr.com) by Saturday July 16th.

## Laugh Lines PARAPROSDOKIANS

"Figures of speech in which the latter part of a sentence or phrase is surprising or unexpected; frequently used in a humorous situation."

"Where there's a will, I want to be in it," is a type of paraprostdokian. Ok, so now enjoy!

1. Do not argue with an idiot. He will drag you down to his level and beat you with experience.
2. The last thing I want to do is hurt you. But it's still on my list.
3. Light travels faster than sound. This is why some people appear bright until you hear them speak.
4. If I agreed with you, we'd both be wrong.
5. We never really grow up, we only learn how to act in public.
6. War does not determine who is right - only who is left.
7. Knowledge is knowing a tomato is a fruit. Wisdom is not putting it in a fruit salad.
8. Evening news is where they begin with 'Good Evening,' and then proceed to tell you why it isn't.
9. To steal ideas from one person is plagiarism. To steal from many is research.
10. A bus station is where a bus stops. A train station is where a train stops. On my desk, I have a work station.

Thanks to *Connie Purdom*

## HUMANIST SOCIETY OF THE SUNCOAST

A chapter of the American Humanist Assoc.  
the Association of Secular Humanist Societies

### Board of Directors

Meets Sept., December, April

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~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*~

**Jim Butler Publisher.**

**Jim Peterson, Editor**

Have an Idea, opinion or essay you want to share?

E-Mail us at:

[jim@suncoasthumanist.com](mailto:jim@suncoasthumanist.com)

## Brighten a Day

### for a member of the family

As we get older, we get better, but sometimes there's just that little hiccup of fate that might dampen our enthusiasm slightly. Then we need each other ...just a little more.

**Brent Yaciw** is a little troubled by a stroke he suffered on April 11th. He would enjoy talking with his friends.

[Brent@aimzoom.com](mailto:Brent@aimzoom.com)

**Bob Collette's wife, Dot**

is having a little trouble with general memory problems.

They can use a little support.

[dotybob@verizon.net](mailto:dotybob@verizon.net)

**Ron Frase** is Living in Ohio, where it's really hot.

[Frasec@aol.com](mailto:Frasec@aol.com)

Please let me know of anyone who would like to be contacted .

**Jim Peterson**

[Jamestp@metrodirect.net](mailto:Jamestp@metrodirect.net)

See **page 3** for more on the new Caring committee

## A Humanist Helping Hand

It has been observed that “charity begins at home.” But there is something more to the notion of charity than merely the socially obligatory motion of making donations and offering support to relatives in times of stress. This is more than just a high falutin intellectual discussion group. We as individuals have long endured the vicissitudes of arrogant criticism for expressing unpopular and unconventional beliefs and ideas.. We come here to seek solace in the company of others with similar experiences. We come to bask in the acceptance we find here and in the unique values we often hear expressed. We find in the lives of others an empathetic resonance with our own lives.

But, as human beings we suffer the same losses, frustrations, setbacks, and triumphs as more conservative people. We have a need to share our collective and individual support to others seeking the refuge, nurturance, warmth, and consolation only we can provide.

A Social Caring Committee has been formed to help with our individual needs in times of distress or discomfort. If you are or know someone who is sick, recovering, hospitalized, going through a life trauma, or just lonely, and who would enjoy talking with other members, please let your editor know so they can be listed in our “Brighten a Day” feature on page 2.

At this point three members have volunteered to participate on the committee:

- ♦ Patricia Walters (soon)
- ♦ Terri Eckstein (813) 891-9399
- ♦ Jerry Moore (727) 455-4973
- ♦ Nan Owens (813) 662-6612

Contact any of them if you feel you or someone in our group may need help.

Humanism is a philosophy with a long history of advocacy for the well being of the human creature. This organization exists largely to provide for the needs of its members.

**Our Humanist Society is actively looking for interesting speakers with novel and well thought out ideas on just about any subject of interest to a general audience - even if not from a distinctly Humanist perspective.**

Let me know if you would like to recommend a person, idea, or organization.

Call Jim at (813) 531-8138 or

E-mail me at:

[jim@suncoasthumanist.com](mailto:jim@suncoasthumanist.com)

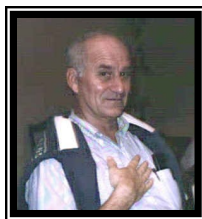
**Have an opinion, idea, news, or essay?**

This newsletter is your space.

For editorial consideration for the next issue, contact Jim Peterson at:

[jim@suncoasthumanist.com](mailto:jim@suncoasthumanist.com)

## Share your favorite restaurant.



### Glenn Paul

has graciously resumed the helm as chair of the of the social committee.

As always, he welcomes your comments and suggestions for future venues for our mid-month dinner.



## Read Humanist Periodicals:

The Humanist, Free Inquiry, Free Mind, Humanist Perspectives, Skeptical Inquirer, Secular Humanist Bulletin, The Florida Humanist Journal, Skeptic, Essays in Humanism, and many others.

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## The Tampa Bay Postcarbon Council

is an autonomous adjunct to the Humanist Society.

Two recent presentations both given by environmental engineer, **Luke Melton** have provided a stimulus that we hope will give new life to the organization.

As we have learned, there are likely to be dramatic changes in the way we live in this century. These will affect all aspects of our lives including housing, transportation, work, the natural environment, and our relations with each other.

This is yet another opportunity to reorder the nature of our species, and the way we interact with our world. The philosophical perspective of humanism can make a significant contribution to that transition. We invite you to become a member of the Council, and make a difference in the quality of our lives. Click below for more info.



## Humanist Quotes

“In my youth, I was told, “One should not talk about religion and politics in public.” On the contrary, these are the two subjects that should be talked about often in public because they affect our lives the most. This saying must have been started, and supported over time, by clergy and politicians...lest they be found out!”



### Frank Prahl

[fprahl@verizon.net](mailto:fprahl@verizon.net)



Read

The insouciantly vexatious thoughts of Steve Brown on [page 5](#)





## HFA E-NEWS

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### An Electronic News Update from The Humanists of Florida Association

#### Orlando: site of 2012 conference; North Florida: site of first regional summit

The newly elected board that met in May selected Orlando as the site of its next conference. President EllenBeth Wachs and executive director, Gin Kohl Lieberman, serve as co-chairs of the committee who will select a date and location in the coming several months. Please contact [info@FloridaHumanist.org](mailto:info@FloridaHumanist.org) if you're from the Orlando area and want to help! Participation on a committee is open to all HFA members.

Also at the meeting, Humanists of the Treasure Coast and the Tallahassee Atheists were awarded the available funds from HFA's 2011 grants program to grow Humanist membership: \$750 each. The rationale was that the groups have young board members as leaders or co-leaders of their respective groups, who understand the board's criteria and can demonstrate innovative approaches for other groups to consider. Additionally, the first regional summit – a regional, grants-training workshop will be held in north Florida (Tallahassee and west) this fall.

#### Secular Coalition of America hosts strategic summit

Several weeks ago, the Secular Coalition for America took another step toward building a stronger future by welcoming a diverse group of more than 100 secular American leaders to Washington, D.C. for its [first-ever Biennial Strategic Summit](#). According to SCA's press release, "These leaders are game changers, and we put them to work on our strategic plan to restore secular values to American government."

You can watch a 5-minute video summary of the summit [here](#)

Please visit  
[www.FloridaHumanist.org](http://www.FloridaHumanist.org)  
to support HFA with your  
membership & donations



Humanists of Florida  
Association  
*Reason and Compassion in Action*

To: Chris McCloskey  
Vice President, Communications  
National Broadcasting Company, Inc.  
30 Rockefeller Plaza  
New York, NY 10112



Dear Mr. McCloskey,

I am writing regarding the controversy over your network airing a version of the Pledge of Allegiance that did not include the wording "under God." Based on news accounts, it appears that certain religious conservatives are overreacting to your network's actions, bombarding your network with telephone and email complaints even though your network has already apologized for the incident. I would like to convey the sentiments of millions of other Americans who, while less vocal about the issue, should be heard.

Your network did nothing wrong by airing the "God-free" version of the Pledge. In fact, a strong argument can be made that this version is the most patriotic. As you no doubt know, the "under God" wording was added to the Pledge only in 1954, at the height of the McCarthy era, after much lobbying by religious organizations. In many ways this was a dark period in American history, with good people being blacklisted and unfairly scrutinized for so-called "un-American" activities. It is not surprising that divisive religious language would have been added during this period (ironically, making a mockery of the "indivisible" language).

Since the religious language was not added until 1954, please be mindful that any soldiers who landed at Normandy would have said the God-free Pledge before taking to the beach in defense of democracy and freedom. So would any soldiers fighting in the Pacific, in Korea, or in the First World War. There is nothing unpatriotic about the beautiful wording "one nation indivisible."

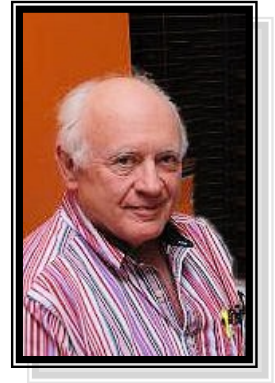
Please rest assured that many Secular Americans long for a return to the truly unifying Pledge that was aired by your network. We thank you for airing it, and we only regret that you apologized for doing so. We hope that you won't be intimidated by the Religious Right bullies who are trying to give the appearance that the entire nation is offended by your actions. They are a small but vocal group, and they do not speak for America. This is a teachable moment, and we hope that your actions will initiate a serious discussion of this issue.

Very truly yours,

David Niose  
President

American Humanist Association

Steve Brown



## Fearlessly Faithing the Future

Increasingly, I've come to look upon the community of humanists as I've experienced us, solely in the U.S., including those who insist on the modifier "secular," as a *faith-based* community.

I can hear a loud "*ouch!*," if not a hurricane level snort, arising from readers -- at least Category 3.

The "*faith*" I see us living and promoting has two flavors: either that humankind is basically good (take THAT, Christianity!) or that humankind is a mixed bag but that goodness will ultimately predominate.

(Isn't it an unlovely thing that, inasmuch as we humans are said to be made in the image of a loving and perfect "God," that we turned out so Christianly awful, so needy of "redemption?"')

There is no proof, no evidence that either humanist *belief* is a matter of *fact*. Historically, "might" has tended to defeat "right," republics devolve into tyrannies and empires, bloodshed made ever more impersonal and geographically unconstrained and control of "people's" governments (such as ours) either always has been or falls under the control of a ruling class and/or individual tyrant.

It is then a matter of the sentiment, or whim, of the ruling class whether the full kind of a life that humanists attest is the right of every human being is available outside that class and, perhaps, its immediate servants. This is not to say that the ruling class contains no iconoclasts or is impermeable to new entrants, who more than likely quickly take on the main policy complexion of their new hosts.

This is not to say that change is impossible. There has been plenty of it, technological and scientific, and also in the way we define and plan the structure and living processes of our societies. But in the way that our societies actually function, there is a lot of slippage between the "plan," that is, for example, the U.S. constitution, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, etc., "twixt the cup and the lip," and reality.

Study after study has shown the general futility of prediction, and one of the most famous, even notorious, studies, that the greater degree of specialization in the fortune teller's expertise, the less his or her success at forecasting (the "fox" has a better crystal ball than the "hedgehog"). My crystal ball was pawned long ago.

We should attract new humanists and encourage our own activisms not by promising Utopia, but only that humanism simply, and importantly, merely opens the gateway to a straighter path toward a better world -- a much more modest goal *if* the goodness inherent in humankind (empathy, cooperation, compassion, kindness, unwillingness to deliberately harm another person) predominates over the worst in us (I don't think another list is necessary).

Maybe our anthem, or "marching song" should be more like "We Shall Overcome," in a secular timbre of course, than "Onward Humanist Soldiers," if indeed we've started to sing that song.

\*\*\*\*\*

I'm no longer the profligate magazine buyer, and damn the expense, that I once was, but I embarked on a browse-a-thon at a Barnes & Noble yesterday as respite from a downpour, and I have one browsing recommendation and one buying recommendation that can also be read online

Happiness has been a topic of discussion dear to humanists. The best brief commentary on "happiness" I've ever come across is embedded as one paragraph in an article in the June issue of "Psychology Today," (which some supermarkets stock). You don't need to buy the magazine, just turn to page 59 and read Paragraph 2, starting "neuroscience." Or, on the other hand, save gasoline and the proverbial tree by going to [www.psychologytoday.com/magazine](http://www.psychologytoday.com/magazine) and clicking on "6 Clues to Character." The entire section on happiness or the entire article on what creates "character" may also pique your interest. I found my recommended paragraph (and the happiness section, for that matter) wanting only in that it failed to note the important role of temperament, which may primarily be the result of that individually varying mix of hormones that flow through us either from birth or after a "remix" in the dramatic shift from childhood to youth.

The new impact of online social networks has me reeling, maybe eventually requiring me to reconsider what it means to be a "friend," but already wondering how much effort is it worth expending to try to absorb the flow of input from these networks that, if you allow it, can come at you at the frenetic pace of a Hollywood action spectacular.

According to my next recommendation, these new networks represent "the third great era" of the World Wide Web. The first was the era of the browser, followed by the era of the search engine, reflecting a pseudo-Biblical Genesis: "In the beginning was the personal computer (PC) which begat intramural networking, which begat "the Web."

(Continued on page 6)

## Steve Brown's Column...(continued from page 5)

The magazine in question, IEEE Spectrum, is the jargon-free monthly published by the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers. This is the third or fourth copy of the magazine that over the years called out to me to buy it, and that I subsequently enjoyed and benefited from reading, and anyone (and, in particular the president of the Humanist Society of the Suncoast) can attest that it would be difficult to find anyone less savvy than I about the new technologies.

The "hard copy" of IEEE Spectrum is supposed to come off the bookstore shelves (no supermarket shelves for this baby) July 3, it's available online directly at [spectrum.ieee.org/static/special-report-the-social-web](http://spectrum.ieee.org/static/special-report-the-social-web), or by going to [www.ieee.org](http://www.ieee.org) and scrolling to the "Technologies" box. If this current special report has been superseded as one of the two direct links in that box, I believe it can be retrieved by clicking on "find an IEEE technology report" in the same box. The page is not at all intimidating; it's attractively laid out, colorful, and easy to navigate.

Next month: my recommendations of the best St. Pete Times and Tampa Tribune Sunday funnies.

Just kidding.

**Steve Brown**  
[brownsteve@verizon.net](mailto:brownsteve@verizon.net)

### ***Defending real freedom has a high cost***



Atheists of Florida Vice-President/Legal Affairs Coordinator, **EllenBeth Wachs** has courageously acted on several government fronts in Polk County in behalf of her civil rights and, for that matter, the rights of all religious minorities in her community who are expected to quietly accept their status as second class citizens.

To silence her, the sheriff, an outspoken fundamentalist Christian, and other like-minded operatives in the county's law enforcement community have persecuted and retaliated forcibly against her. EllenBeth was arrested and jailed on two bogus felony charges: allegations that no one in U.S. history has ever been arrested, charged, or, let alone, convicted for. This is undeniably religious based persecution and EllenBeth needs your help.

She has hired an experienced legal team and needs financial assistance to fight back against this abuse of power. Please help EllenBeth by donating to her Legal Fund: [www.atheistsofflorida.org](http://www.atheistsofflorida.org)

## OUR BEST LETTERS

### **A Life Sentence of Joblessness**

After reading the Jesuit priest's informative column on virtually sentencing former felons to a life of unemployment because of their past criminal mistakes; it reminded me of how hard I have worked the past 7+ years to get former felons their civil rights restored - after serving their time of incarceration and paying their debt to society.

Then, as it happens, Pam Bondi, Rick Scott and the rest of the new clemency board erase all the progress of automatic civil rights restoration for lesser felonies put in place by former governor Crist!

By making these released felons wait FIVE full years before applying for rights restoration, are we not (almost) suggesting these former felons return to a life of petty crime - just for survival - given they are denied work licenses to obtain gainful employment - in addition to their other civil rights such as the right to vote!

**Glenn A. Paul**  
[kpaul29@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:kpaul29@tampabay.rr.com)

# Christianity: The World Turned Upside Down, or Von den Hinterweltlern

## by Bob Shepherd

Platonism, through Christianity, emerged in a particularly insidious form that channels, controls, and corrupts the very conceptual framework through which we view the world. It is difficult to over-estimate the extent to which this is so.

In its Christian guise, Platonism took the form of *Contemptu Mundi*, contempt for the world and, of course, for the body, which is part of the world.

It is child's play, of course, to detail the long and sordid history of concrete violence under the banner of the Prince of Peace: the recurring genocides of the Old Testament, the pogroms, the Crusades, the Inquisition, the slaughter of indigenous peoples around the globe, and so on.

What isn't so often remarked, however, is the extent to which the general worldview of the Christians has robbed Christian peoples themselves, over two millennia, of a sane orientation toward their own animal being and toward the world, one that would maximize their well-faring.

Christianity teaches us to look beyond the actual to some airy nothing that is more real. In doing so, it marks as of little consequence actual pleasure and suffering. These make no difference. Keep your eye on the prize. There will be pie in the sky when you die.

The truly insidious part of this **life-denying** teaching lies in its **corruption of our language**, of the very categories in which we think. Orwell wrote of how New Speak was created to ensure that it would not even be possible for inhabitants of Oceania to formulate and express a subversive thought. As a result of two millennia of Church domination of institutions and thought in the West, we have come, instinctively, to think in terms of a set of **binary oppositions** that place on one side that which is of the earth and the body as that which is *low, base, physical, profane, undignified* and on the other side the airy nothings of the Church's promises, which are *high, noble, spiritual, sacred, dignified*.

It would be impossible to relate the extent of the cost of uncritical acceptance of this insane map of the universe that **makes the real into the unreal and the unreal into the real**.

One result of this set of binaries that determines our thinking: People commonly think of physical pleasure as base, and they do not seek to maximize their own pleasure and that of others. So, throughout the centuries, people have lost most of the opportunities that they have had to enjoy their own bodies, those of others, their being-in-the-world. **As a result of this insidious inversion of natural thought on the part of the Church, people have not learned to refine to a high degree their sensory appreciation of the world, their presentness to it, their being-in and being-with it, with the Earth, with other animals, with one another, even with themselves.** They have not learned to recognize and to develop to their highest degree all forms of physical pleasure, from the sound of rain and the caress of wind to nuzzling from an animal to hugging of a child or sharing of one's wholeness with a sexual partner, and they have learned to accept pain, suffering as the lot of those on this side of paradise.

St. Jerome wrote that it was sinful to sit in a garden because doing so was pleasurable. **That is the true Christian *summa theologica*.**

Horrifically, the Church's setting itself against the body has been the primary reason why, throughout the centuries, people have not even learned enough about their bodies to enjoy those bodies safely, to make caring for those bodies the highest of priorities. Even today, the Church is hard at work around the globe teaching the poorest and most uneducated of people to avoid birth control and various precautions against sexually transmitted disease, as if it didn't already have enough blood and suffering and sacrifice on its hands. Meanwhile, the priests have been molesting children, and fundamentalist anti-gay preachers, politicians, and "family counselors" have been soliciting favors in airport bathrooms and taking junkets with companions from Rent-a-Boy.com. ( **See page 8** )



It is time to reject, definitively, once and for all, the inverted map drawn by the church. You want to see sacred? Look at a dragonfly. Taste a strawberry. I mean, REALLY taste it. Look into the eyes of a cow or of your child. There's no reason to want to go to some far-off heaven. Heaven is all around us. We are already there. **We have only to make it so, to insist that it be so.**

Unlike most (fortunately, not all!) of his followers, Yeshua of Nazareth was in ways a wise and wonderful fellow. But he didn't quite get what I've said, above, for he lived in a time so miserable that it was IMPOSSIBLE to imagine making this here, this now, worthwhile. For people of his time, the airy nothings provided, at least, some alternative to nihilism and some check on the worst excesses of the powerful (who had to worry, themselves, about gaining access to airy fairy land). But such is no longer the case. **It's time for us to turn the map right side up so that we can learn, at last, to read ourselves right.**

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**Robert D. Shepherd** is a writer, editor, graphic designer, consultant to publishers, and a vegan activist. He founded and served as CEO of a publishing house, Advanced Instructional Materials, which he sold to Houghton, Mifflin in 2001. He has worked as Director of Marketing and Communications for The Effectiveness Group, a management consulting firm; as a ghost writer for Tarcher Publishing; as VP for Development at Great Source Education Group; and as a teacher of high-school English, drama, and speech. He is the author of over one hundred textbooks in writing, grammar, literature, music, American history, mathematics, and computer science, including *Grace Abounding: The Core Knowledge Anthology of African-American Literature, Music, and Art* (a critical history and anthology); annotated study editions of the works of Shakespeare; the widely used *Writing Research Papers*; and the college-level textbook *Introduction to Computers and Technology*.

He is currently working on three novels, a collection of essays on Continental philosophy, a collection of his short stories and poetry, and an encyclopedic work on veganism with the working title *Trillions of Universes*. He holds a bachelor's degree from Indiana University and has done graduate studies at the University of Chicago, the University of Michigan, and Harvard. His areas of interest include philosophy of mind, epistemology, phenomenology, poetry, syntax, logic, business strategy, and the theory and practice of quality control. His publications list and resume can be found at <http://www.bobshepherdonline.com>.

### Good death advocates mourn loss of Pioneer

leadership at the American Humanist Association mourned the death of **Dr. Jack Kevorkian**, a physician, humanitarian, and brazen advocate for end-of-life choice. [Dr. Kevorkian was given the Humanist Hero Award](#) by the American Humanist Association in 1994. The American Humanist Association became one of the first national organizations to support end of life choices in a [1974 statement](#).

"Dr. Kevorkian led the charge for the right of those who wanted the freedom to end their suffering," said Roy Speckhardt, executive director of the American Humanist Association. "His unwavering determination in the face of protest, and even legal repercussions, was a testament to his strong conviction and compassion."

Dr. Kevorkian spent much his career advocating for the legalization of euthanasia. With a strong sense of ethics, Kevorkian refused 97 percent of assisted suicide requests received, reserving his services for the terminally ill and suffering.



**Dr. Jack Kevorkian M.D.**

Though successfully challenging the law on numerous prior occasions, Dr. Kevorkian was charged with second degree murder for his efforts, and served 9 years in jail. He was paroled in 2007, last year Al Pacino played his role in the film *You Don't Know Jack*, [reviewed in the Humanist magazine](#), and he continued to lobby for euthanasia's legalization until his death at the age of 83.

"Dr. Kevorkian's contributions to medicine and humanity are great," concluded Speckhardt. "He gave energy to the 'death with dignity' movement and brought this important civil liberties issue to the forefront. History will thank him for that."

"Besides, what is ethics?" Kevorkian continued in his 1994 Humanist Hero speech. "Can you define it? My definition is simple: ethics is saying and doing what is right at the time...doing the right thing changes with time."



**Compassion & Choices**  
Choice & Care at the End of Life.

Find out more about end of life issues. Everyone has to face this final question. But there are choices not provided by conventional institutions. For more information see: [www.compassionandchoices.org](http://www.compassionandchoices.org)



## Be an active Humanist!

At a recent Development Committee meeting, the members present discussed several initiatives to enable members to play more significant roles in the life of our community. The social Caring committee is one such group, but there are others. See page 3. Join an action committee; make Humanism happen!

These are times when the most reactionary sectors of society are acting openly to undermine years of social progress to promote policies that enrich and empower only themselves. The multiple dimensions of crises that sweep over us demand that we not only pay attention, but play an active role in shaping a more humanistic response to them.

Being an active agent of social change in many ways defines the practical meaning of Humanism. Despite the vast numbers of us on this planet, too many are in thrall to religious delusion; too few actually are involved in making life better for everyone.

Especially if you are retired, or have leisure, you should consider expanding the range of your positive involvement in the lives of others. In a life free of baseless fears and ignorant superstitions, we can fulfill ourselves in helping others to overcome those same barriers.

As always, we will continue to participate in social service programs. Be sure to contribute! -- - *Jim P.*



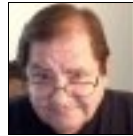
Atheists. Agnostics. Humanists.  
Americans.

## ACTION ALERT

The new Secular Coalition of Florida is now forming under the leadership of Dr. Richard Golden of Miami. Over 30 groups supporting the fully secular vision of our country's government have lent support to the effort. A new website has been launched at:

<http://www.secularflorida.org> .

According to Dr. Golden, "The Florida Chapter of this group would provide a voice on political issues for our small local non-theist groups. It will allow non-profit organizations to retain their 501 (c) (3) status while giving them a political lobbying force. This organization will function in a manner similar to the moral majority, which thirty years ago united small churches into a powerful national lobby and ultimately elected a president. We, too, believe that by uniting we can become a powerful voice. We clearly have the numbers and just need the organization. In Florida alone there are three million non-theists."



**Bob Byrch** has agreed to represent our Humanist Society's interest in the council of the coalition. He will be a conduit of information from the Council and bring our issues to them for consideration.



Dear ACLU Supporters,

Thanks to you — our allies, supporters and members throughout Florida — we are now actively engaged in a daily battle with the Scott administration and the Florida Legislature in defense of the civil liberties and constitutional values that brought us all to the ACLU. [Last week, we filed two lawsuits](#) challenging new laws approved by Gov. Scott and the Florida Legislature to stop them from trampling on your freedom and personal privacy — and it was only a four day week!

### **This is just the beginning.**

In the last few days there has been a great deal of coverage of Governor Scott's signing a law to require government drug screens of those in need of temporary government assistance. This past weekend [Governor Scott and I appeared on CNN Sunday Morning to debate this policy](#).

**Our strong opposition to this radical expansion of intrusive searches without any suspicion has triggered a state and national debate on the need to protect freedom and privacy** against unconstitutional governmental encroachment that politicians like Rick Scott consider "common sense." Here's a good example of how our work has stimulated a conversation about constitutional freedoms — [an editorial which sees drug testing "as unconstitutional governmental invasions of privacy."](#) It ran in newspapers in both Panama City and Lake Wales, two Florida locales that the ACLU does not usually receive heavy support for our work. **Howard Simon**

For more information on Civil liberty in Florida, see: <http://www.aclufl.org>

**People**  
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**Our Website** All newsletters from the past two years  
<http://suncoasthumanist.com>